



STATE OF VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
120 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

May 24, 2006

Greetings Vermont Homeschoolers,

On April 12, 2006, Governor Douglas signed into law H. 862, An Act Relating to Home Study Programs, effective for the school year 2006-2007 and each year thereafter. The revised *Guidelines for Home Study in Vermont* will be mailed out soon to enrolled families. The *Guidelines* will more fully explain all the changes in law and office procedure. This letter is to briefly inform you of the changes in the new law along with any new or changed information that will need to be submitted with a home study enrollment.

The existing home study law, 16 VSA § 906 (a) and (b) says that home study programs shall provide learning experiences in the minimum course of study adapted to a child's age and ability in the eight areas. This section of the law is unchanged. **The new law does not exempt homeschoolers from doing a minimum course of study. The law exempts qualified homeschoolers from submitting their minimum course of study to the Department of Education.**

Informational changes to the existing home study law include:

- The age of a child is to be described by month and year of birth, for example, 4/99 or April, 1999
- The words "handicapping condition" have been replaced with "disability"
- The signatures of all custodial parents or guardians who are legally authorized to make educational changes must be included in the enrollment notice. If a signature is missing or if name(s) of the parent(s)/guardian(s) differ from the child, an explanation and supporting documentation will be requested
- The mailing address and town of legal residence must be included in an enrollment notice

Changes to the law regarding the exemption from the minimum course of study are:

- A home study program which has successfully completed two consecutive years of home study is not required to submit an annual minimum course of study except:
 - During a transition period effective for the 2005-2006, 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years, a home study program must have successfully completed three consecutive years. For the 2008-2009 school year forward, two consecutive, successful years will qualify a home study program for the exemption.
 - A home study program must submit a minimum course of study for each child who is 12 years old at the time the enrollment notice is submitted.
 - If a child has a disability, the home study program must continue to submit the adaptations that will be made to accommodate the disability.

For the purposes of this section, successful completion of a home study program shall mean that:

- In each of the two consecutive years (three years during transitional years), the program has not been disallowed by order of a hearing officer
- The previously enrolled student made progress commensurate with age and ability in all subject areas of the minimum course of study
- The home study program has otherwise complied with the requirements of this section

To have a successful “year”, the enrollment notice must be received in our office by October 1 and the home study program could not have been withdrawn during the school year.

Enrollment notices will continue to be accepted after October 1. However, the school year for which the enrollment notice is submitted after October 1 will not be considered a full year.

Further changes to the existing law include:

- Also effective for the school year 2006-2007 and subsequent years, a home study student who is 13 years of age or older will no longer be required to study physical education, comprehensive health education, and fine arts. Of course, you are not prevented from studying these areas, but may now choose to study other areas instead. Please note: It is still necessary to send an end-of-the-year assessment for these areas of the minimum course of study for the 2005-2006 school year.
- The option for using a teacher letter for an end-of-the-year assessment has been modified. Changes include:
 - Only Vermont-licensed teachers may do end-of-the-year assessments.
 - The assessment must be in a report in a form designated by the commissioner of the Vermont Department of Education. This form has been sent to Vermont teachers who have done previous end-of-the-year assessments, for use in the 2005-2006 school year.

Regardless of whether or not they qualify for the exemption, homeschoolers will need to submit to the Department of Education:

- Form A (Cover Sheet For Home Study Enrollment)
- Form C (Courses Taken In Public/Independent School) if applicable
- Form D (Consent For Release of Information) if so desired
- Form E (Home Study Instructors) if other than the parent or primary instructor listed on Form A
- Adaptations to be used to accommodate any disability
- An end-of-the-year assessment for each child enrolled during the preceding year

Homeschoolers will continue to receive from the Department of Education, within the timeframes as defined by 16 VSA § 166(b) (b), regardless of whether or not they qualify for the exemption:

- A letter requesting additional information if their enrollment notice is incomplete
- Once the Department of Education has received all required information, a letter stating that the enrollment notice is complete

Methods for End-of-the-Year Assessments:

- A report or letter by a teacher licensed in Vermont
 - A packet containing information about the requirements for teacher letters has been mailed to licensed Vermont teachers who have done these assessments in the past. We are strongly encouraging parents and teachers to use these expectations for the

2005-2006 assessments. Parents and teachers are required to use these guidelines for 2006-2007 assessments and thereafter. The teacher letter end-of-the-year assessment information can also be accessed online at

www.state.vt.us/educ/new/html/pgm_homestudy.html.

- This legislation takes effect for the home study programs enrolling for the school year 2006-2007; therefore, for the end-of-the-year assessment for 2005-2006 only, we will accept a letter from a teacher in an approved independent school. The teacher should use the teacher letter expectations to write a letter or use the form given, and should indicate that he/she is not licensed in Vermont but is teaching at a Vermont approved independent school.
- A teacher doing an end-of-the-year assessment for the school year 2006-2007 will probably ask to see the home study program's minimum course of study whether or not it was submitted to the Department of Education.
- The teacher advisory report and parent/student's instructor report sections were combined to read "A report prepared by the parents, the student's instructor, or a teacher advisory service report from a publisher of a commercial curriculum together with a portfolio of the student's work that includes work samples to demonstrate progress in each subject area in the minimum course of study."
- Another choice for the annual assessment has been to use an achievement test. The new law says you may use "the complete results of a standardized achievement test approved by the commissioner, administered in a manner approved by the testing company, and scored in accordance with this subdivision." This means that the test must be scored by the testing company or a licensed teacher. A list of approved tests has been compiled. This list includes most of the tests homeschoolers have commonly been using. Please call the home study office if you have questions which need answering before you receive the revised *Guidelines for Home Study in Vermont*.

In addition to this letter, if you qualify for the minimum course of study exemption, an individualized letter has been included here. If you did not receive notification from us and believe you do qualify, please contact our office as soon as possible so we may research your specific situation.

Sincerely,

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